



## OPEN SPACE & TRAILS DEPARTMENT

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### STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Bentley Henderson  
**FROM:** Christine Zenel, Resource Specialist  
**DATE:** October 13, 2021  
**FOR:** October 26, 2021 Consent Agenda  
**REQUEST:** Approval exercise Option Agreement to acquire the North Star - Earth Energy Resources Claims

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The OSAC made a unanimous recommendation at their July 2021 meeting that the County pursue acquisition of numerous mining claims located on and near the ridge of North Star Mountain, on the Summit/Park County border (Upper Blue Basin, see attached map.)

#### Mining Claims

Summit County  
Schedule No. 2809065: White Metal MS# 14091, Double Standard MS# 14091, Gold Rock MS# 4213, Free

Coinage MS# 14091, Magnolia MS# 3694, Prospect MS# 7250  
Schedule No. 2809455: Palmetto MS# 18729

Park County  
Schedule No. R0090665: Magnolia #3694  
Schedule No. R0090948: Prospect #7250  
Schedule No. R0091480: Republic #16619

Total Acres  
53.366 acres

Owner  
Earth Energy Resources, LLC

Cost  
\$240,147 (\$4,500/acre)

These properties meet OST's Open Space Selection Criteria as follows.

#### Open Space Selection Criteria

- Access: Lands that provide trailheads or public access to recreation areas on National Forest and other significant properties.
  - The ridge of North Star Mountain is dotted with private properties, significantly impeding contiguous public access across the ridge, which is otherwise under the Forest Service's jurisdiction. Despite the existence of private property, hiking up North Star Mountain is popular in the summer and backcountry skiing is popular in the winter.
- Agricultural/Cultural: Lands that contribute significantly to Summit County's past, including agricultural lands with irrigated meadows or open cropland, ranching areas, and historic sites. The historic, cultural, or social significance of these types of properties should contribute to the

community's identity and wellbeing.

- Old mine sites, including the Ling and Magnolia Mine, exist along informal hiking routes up North Star Mountain and provide insight into historic mining activity in the Upper Blue Basin.
- Buffers: Natural and undeveloped lands which separate and buffer the impacts of development, define the boundaries of urbanized areas, prevent urban sprawl and strip development, and contribute to the rural mountain quality of the local landscape.
  - Acquisition of these properties would preclude development, including mining activity, within this incredibly scenic landscape that hosts multiple wildlife populations and outstanding recreation opportunities.
- Extensions: Land adjacent to publicly held property which meets open space criteria guidelines and which can combine with other open space properties to enlarge and/or connect existing open space parcels.
  - All properties are inholdings into the National Forest and would be good candidates for future USFS conveyance.
- Recreational: Lands with significant recreational value, particularly non-motorized passive uses not requiring intensive maintenance or management.
  - Accessed from Hoosier Pass, an old road cut and informal hiking routes cross these properties, providing outstanding recreational value. Hiking to the summit of North Star via these private properties is popular in the summer and offers a more solitary, high alpine experience with sweeping views similar to Quandary Peak, with less visitation. Backcountry skiing is similarly popular on North Star Mountain in the winter.
- Unique Lands: Lands possessing unique values such as outstanding (but not necessarily generally visible) scenic quality, rare flora, riparian quality, wetlands, critical wildlife habitat, fragile alpine areas, or unusual geologic or topographical formations.
  - These properties encompass fragile alpine tundra home to mountain goats, ptarmigan, marmot, and pika. Their scenic quality is outstanding, offering views of neighboring 14ers including Quandary Peak and Mount Lincoln and Bross.
- View Corridors: Land with high aesthetic appeal and variety within major viewsheds, whose lands are generally visible, apparent, and appreciated by residents and visitors and through preservation will maintain the rural mountain appearance of Summit County.
  - Nestled in the Continental Divide and accessed from Hoosier Pass, these properties provide outstanding views of both Summit and Park County. Quandary Peak and Blue Lakes can be seen to the north, and Mount Lincoln and Bross to the south. The view corridor encompassing these properties is illustrative of the tall peaks and alpine environments that define Summit County's rural mountain appearance.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION/REQUEST:** Staff concurs with the OSAC's recommendation to pursue acquisition of the North Star - Earth Energy Resources claims at a cost of \$240,147 to the Open Space Fund, with the Town of Breckenridge covering 50% of that cost. Staff requests BOCC approval to exercise the Option Agreement and move forward with closing in December 2021.

Cc: Scott Vargo, Jeff Huntley, Jim Curnutte